

## Former prosecutor takes JAG slot

**by Rachel Newton**

If you work in the headquarters building at Pine Bluff Arsenal, you may have seen a new face in the first floor hallways. If you have visited the Judge Advocates Office lately, you may even have gotten to meet the new attorney, Erin Burns. And, you may also have noticed, that unlike Capt. Justin Buller, our last JAG officer, he doesn't wear a uniform. Well, at least not at this job.

"The Army decided to do away with the military slot for this position and outsourced it for a civilian," said Burns. "I am, however, a uniformed JAG with the Arkansas Air National Guard. I work a dual role. I am in the military with the Air Force and I work as a civilian for the Army."

One of the reasons, Burns said he sought out the job at the Arsenal is that public service makes him tick. "To me serving in the military is the pinnacle of public service," he said.

Prior to coming to PBA, Burns was a prosecutor in Pulaski County (Ark.) for the past four years. "I was doing criminal litigation and prosecution," he said. "Most recently, I had been doing rape and felony domestic violence cases. It was never a dull moment. It was also a hard area to work in sometimes, especially the cases involving children since I have two of my own. It is hard to leave that kind of thing at the office sometimes."

Prior to the job as prosecutor, Burns, who got his law degree at the University Of Arkansas School of Law in Little Rock and his undergraduate degree at the University of Central Arkansas at Conway, said he also served in a private practice. "I was with a firm who did complex business transactions and estate planning," he said.

A native of Northeast Arkansas, Burns currently lives in Maumelle, with his wife and his two daughters. "We have lived there for about six years and are pretty well rooted there," he said. "We have enjoyed living there."

Burns said he met his wife, who is from Magnolia, in college. "My family is still in Northeast Arkansas and hers is still down south, so we live in the middle," he said.

Having only been on the job for a month at this time of the interview, Burns was still getting used to his office and his role. "I'm in basically the same position as Doug (Faith)," he said. "Our primary responsibility is to keep the commander out of trouble. We are here to give advice."

Services are also provided to those people who have an affiliation with the military. "If they are active duty, in the National Guard or Reserves or retired military we can help them out," he said. "We do estate planning and sometimes they just want to bounce something off of us. We can't go into court and represent them but we can listen to them and help them out."

Burns said that some of the activities he enjoys in his spare time are whatever his children and his wife want to do. "I read a lot and like to trout fish and duck hunt," he said. "We do a lot of outdoor stuff like hiking and camping."

As a prosecutor, Burns said that he handled anywhere from 100 to 200 active cases at a time and was in court nearly every day. "This is definitely not the same type of case load," he said. "This job is more informational. Not only do I provide information to the commander but also to all the directors as well. We are here to help them with the issues and help them make good sound decisions."

With his diverse background, he said he hopes he is able to bring something new to the table. "I knew when I started my undergraduate degree that I was probably going to law school," he said. "I majored in political science and there is really nothing else to do with that degree but teach. I learned a lot from working in the private sector it wasn't really what I wanted to do. Working for the public is just what makes me tick and I think I knew that going into college."

The helping part of being an attorney is what Burns said he really likes. "I like being a sounding board for folks. I hope to be able to fill the shoes that Buller left and I hope my background brings some value to the Army. I'm looking forward to a long career. "